



**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service**

# Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge

*Comprehensive Conservation Plan*

*February 2009*

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2/9/09

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2/17/2009

Date



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## **Refuge Vision Statement**

The Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge promotes the environmental health and works to strengthen the biological diversity of associated habitats within the Wallkill Valley. Through active management, the refuge protects and conserves wetland-dependent species, especially the federally listed bog turtle. We also support protection for state-listed species, migratory birds and regionally rare plant communities.

Local communities realize quality of life benefits as residents and visitors enjoy the refuge's natural beauty and biological diversity. Visitors engage in a variety of wildlife-dependent activities including hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, and environmental education and interpretation. Through these programs, we share the ecological significance of the Wallkill River Valley and the refuge's links with other natural areas.

We value and seek the support of conservation partners and the public as we further acquire and manage exceptional wildlife habitats that contribute to the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

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# Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge

## *Comprehensive Conservation Plan* *February 2009*

### **Abstract**

<b>Type of Action:</b>	Administrative
<b>Lead Agency:</b>	U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service
<b>Responsible Official:</b>	Marvin Moriarty, Regional Director, Region 5
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The Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge was established by Congress in 1990 with a 7,500-acre acquisition boundary stretching from Sussex County, New Jersey in the south to Orange County, New York in the north. This Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) presents our management plans for the refuge over the next 15 years. Its 11 appendixes provide additional information supporting our analysis. Appendix G is a Land Protection Plan that expands the refuge's original acquisition boundary by 9,550 acres. Highlights of the CCP follow.

This plan includes an array of management actions that, in our professional judgment, work best toward achieving the purposes of the refuge, our vision and goals for those lands, and goals in state and regional conservation plans. We recommended alternative B from the draft CCP/EA to our Regional Director as the best alternative for managing this refuge over the next 15 years. He selected it for development into this final CCP.

This document expands the refuge's original acquisition boundary by 9,550 acres, creating a new refuge acquisition boundary of 17,050 acres total. We will acquire new lands from willing sellers through a combination of fee-simple and easement purchase. The expansion area includes four focus areas. The 7,079-acre Papakating Creek Focus Area is the largest, and encompasses a 15-mile tributary of the Wallkill River. All four focus areas have tremendous wetland resource values, and together they form a key corridor connecting preserved habitats on the Kittatinny Ridge to the west and the Hudson Highlands to the east. The expansion area will fully complement and enhance the Federal, State, and private conservation partnerships actively involved in protecting this unique ecosystem.

Also through implementation of this plan, we will allocate more resources toward managing and monitoring federal-listed species that now live or historically lived on the refuge. We will take a more proactive approach to restoring wetlands, and establish a 100-meter forested riparian corridor along either side of the Wallkill River. We will establish three grassland focus areas on the refuge, and let other small fields revert to scrub-shrub habitat.

We will continue our current hunt program on Service-owned lands in New Jersey and also open those lands to bear hunting according to New Jersey State seasons. We will provide at least one additional fishing access site within the original refuge acquisition boundary. We will increase access to Service-owned lands by opening at least two new trails and extending an existing trail, and we will also develop new interpretive materials and work with partners to expand our environmental education programs. Funding and staffing will increase to adequately support program expansions.